

## PART IV

## THE PATTERN OF AGRICULTURE

Farms - Number and Size

According to the Census of Agriculture, there were 981 farms in Walla Walla County in 1959. This was 120 less than was enumerated five years earlier in 1954. The Census definition of a farm in 1959 was more restrictive than in 1954 and this accounted for part of the reduction in the number of farms between the two Census years. In Walla Walla County, the decrease in number of farms which resulted from the change in farm definition from 1954 to 1959 was 62. Census data indicate that a peak number of farms was reached around 1920 when there were 1,502 farms. The overall trend in number of farms has been downward since then. In 1959, with 981, Walla Walla County ranked eighteenth in the state in the number of farms.

Both small and large farms are common in Walla Walla County. In 1959, about 20.8 percent of the farms in the county were under 10 acres while 20.5 percent were farms of 1,000 acres or more. The average size of farm in Walla Walla County was 838.7 acres compared with 362.9 for the state. Walla Walla ranked tenth among Washington counties in average size per farm in 1959.

Table 8. Farms, Number and Average Size, Land in Farms  
Walla Walla County, 1900-1959

Year	Total Farms in the County	Average size of farms in the County (acres)	Total County Area in Farms (acres)	Percent of County area in Farms
1900	1,029	633.5	651,847	79.0
1910	1,383	534.8	739,699	89.7
1920	1,502	468.2	703,251	85.3
1925	1,415	422.8	598,261	72.5
1930	1,498	469.2	702,909	85.2
1940	1,420	512.0	726,971	88.2
1945	1,294	577.7	747,578	90.6
1950	1,228	646.6	793,968	96.3
1954	1,101	747.5	822,993	99.8
1959	981	838.7	822,729	101.1 <sup>1/</sup>

<sup>1/</sup> The excess of farm acreage over approximate land area is due to the fact that the entire acreage of a farm is tabulated as in the county in which the headquarters is located even though a part of the farm may be situated in an adjoining county.

Source: U. S. Census of Agriculture

Between 1954 and 1959 farm numbers in all size group categories, except those above 500 acres, showed a decline in Walla Walla County. The largest reduction in numbers involved farms under 10 acres. For this group, much of the change is the result of the change in Census definition. For the larger farms there has been a tendency to consolidate, with the objective of increasing efficiency, especially where mechanization is involved. This has been accomplished

either by purchasing or leasing small farms and adding them to other units. Successful livestock and grain farmers have added more land to their operations in order to increase their total returns.

Land in farms, which reached a high of 739,699 acres in 1910, dropped to 598,261 acres in 1925. Since then, however, the total farmland operated by Walla Walla County farmers steadily increased to establish a new high of 822,993 acres in 1954. The figure in 1959 was slightly lower--822,729 acres. The 1954 acreage in farmlands represented 99.8 percent of the approximate land area of Walla Walla County which amounted to 824,320 acres. The land area of the county in 1959 was dropped to 814,080 acres (10,240 acres less than in 1954) because of changes in the sizes of reservoirs, lakes, streams, etc. In 1959, therefore, the Census of Agriculture indicated that farmlands operated by Walla Walla County farmers represent 101.1 percent of the county land area. The apparent excess of the farm acreage over approximate land area of the county in 1959 resulted from the fact that the entire acreage of a farm was tabulated as in the county in which the headquarters was located, even though a part of the farm might have been situated in an adjoining county.

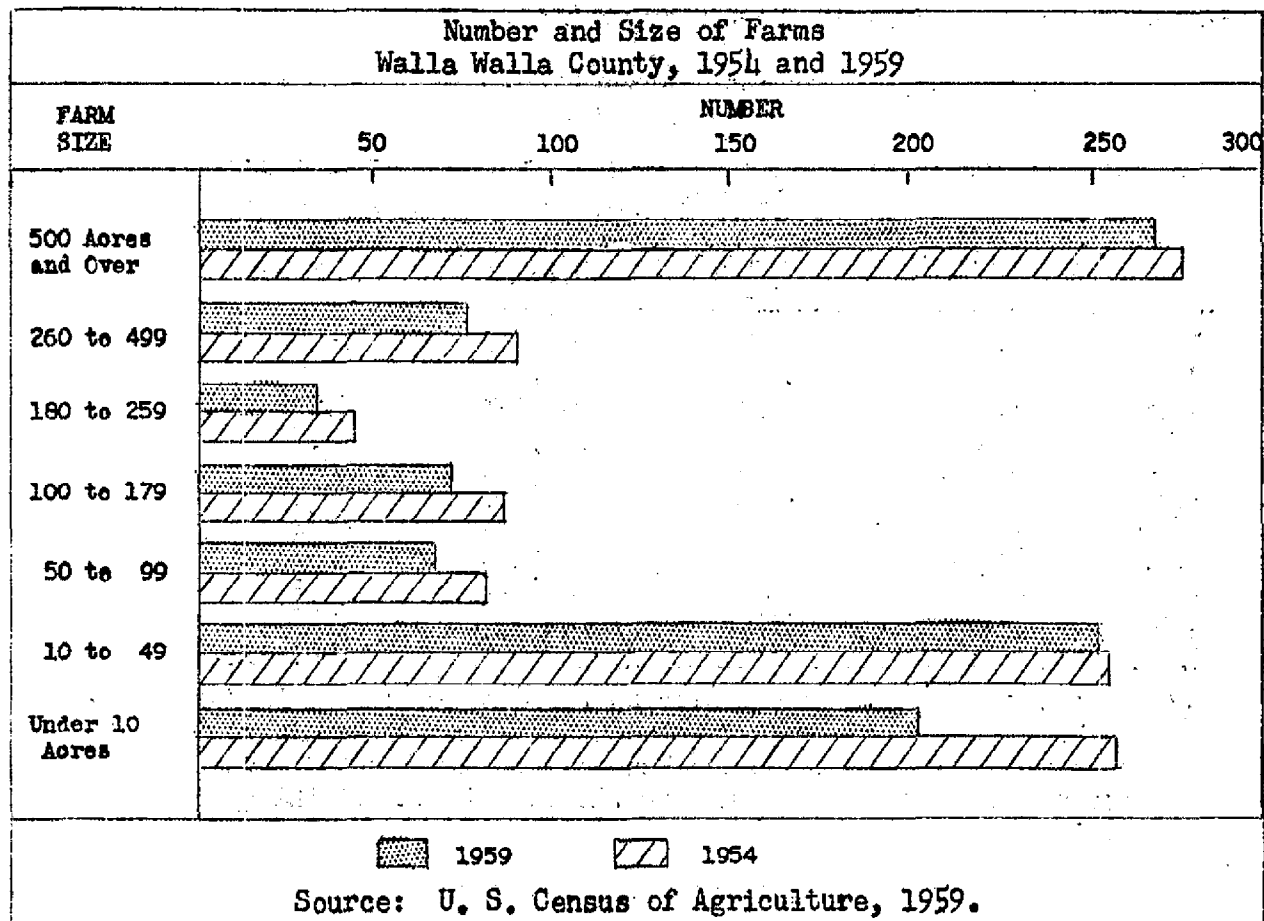


Figure 8. Number and Size of Walla Walla County Farms, 1954 and 1959.

In 1959, about 87 percent of the farmland operated by Walla Walla County farmers was in units of 1,000 acres or more. Farms under 50 acres represented only .8 percent of the total farmland. Farms of 1,000 acres or more contain large acreages of range and fallow land as well as grain and other crops.

### Types of Farms

Walla Walla County has a wide variety of farm types, according to the Census of Agriculture. In 1959, the most common type was the field crop farms comprising nearly 35 percent of all Walla Walla County farms. About 88 percent of the field crop farms raised cash grains. Next in numbers were vegetable farms which added up to 88 farm units or 9 percent of the total farm figure. General farms numbered 80 in 1959 and represented 8.1 percent of the county farm count. (Census defined general farms as those growing field seed crops, hay and/or silage. A farm was also classified as general if it had cash income from three or more sources and did not meet the criteria for any other type.)

Livestock farms were fourth in numbers followed by farms specializing in dairy and those in poultry. Only 6 farms were in the fruit and nut farm category in 1959. Almost 32 percent of the Walla Walla County farms were classified as miscellaneous by the Census. This category included farms raising nursery and greenhouse products, forest products, mules, horses, colts and ponies. Also included in this group were all institutional farms and Indian reservations.

Some farm types in Walla Walla County have increased in numbers in recent years while others have decreased. Miscellaneous and unclassified farms increased by 23 units between 1954 and 1959 and represented the category with the largest increase during this period. There were also 12 more dairy farms enumerated in 1959 than in 1954 while livestock farms increased by 7 units over the same period. There were no farms specializing in fruits and nuts in 1954 while 6 were counted in 1959. Farm types which decreased in number between 1954 and 1959 included field crop farms, vegetable farms, poultry farms and general farms.

Table 9. Types of Farms, Walla Walla County, 1959

Type of Farms	Estimated Number of Farms	Percent of all farms in the county	
		1954	1959
Total farms in county .....	981	100.0	100.0
Field crop farms .....	340	40.0	34.7
Cash-grain .....	300	35.6	30.6
Other field-crop .....	40	4.4	4.1
Vegetable farms .....	88	12.1	9.0
Fruit-and-nut farms .....	6	—	.6
Poultry farms .....	36	2.6	3.7
Dairy farms .....	42	5.0	4.3
Livestock farms other than poultry and dairy	76	6.1	7.7
General farms .....	80	8.7	8.1
Miscellaneous and unclassified farms .....	313	25.5	31.9

Source: U. S. Census of Agriculture.

### Farm Residence and Operation

Walla Walla County agriculture is characterized by a significant number of operators residing on farms and dividing work between agriculture and off-farm employment. In 1959, nearly 45 percent of the farm operators worked off their

farms. Almost 32 percent worked off the farms more than 100 days per year. On an income basis, 35 percent of the operators and their families gained more cash income from off-farm work than was received from farm products marketed from their own farms.

The majority of Walla Walla County farmers live on the farms they operate. Over 92 percent of the farmers reported living on the farms they operated in 1959. Others lived in nearby villages and towns.

### Farmland Utilization

Crops were harvested from about 34 percent of the land in farms in 1959. An additional 29.1 percent was in summerfallow or idle cropland while 3.5 percent was in pastured cropland. Woodlands constituted only 5.2 percent of Walla Walla County's total farmland in 1959. About 90 percent of the farm woodlands was pastured. Other pastures amounted to 23.7 percent of the county farmland. The remaining farmland, about 4.4 percent, was in house lots, roads, wasteland, etc.

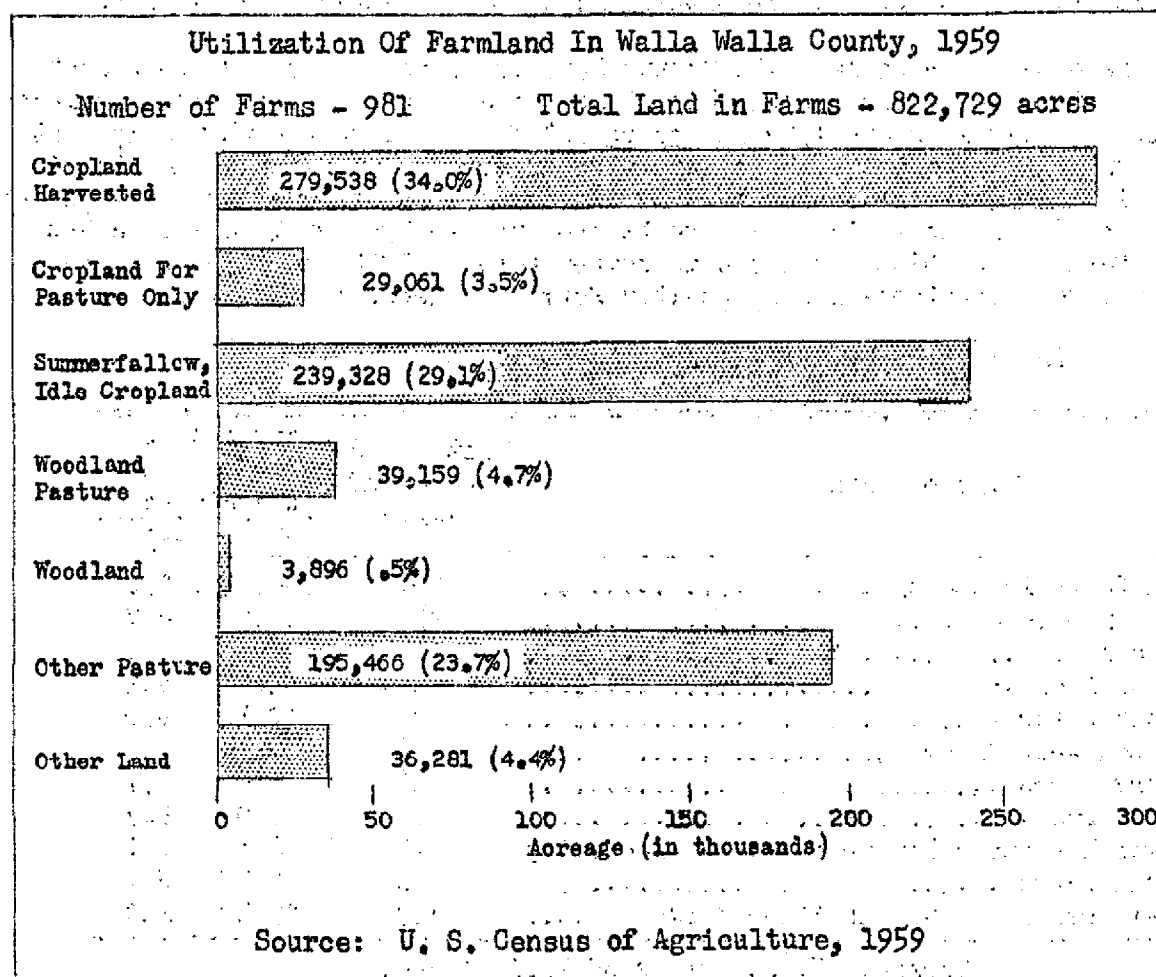


Figure 9. Utilization of Farmland in Walla Walla County, 1959.

### Farm Values

The value of farm lands and buildings in Walla Walla County has increased greatly since 1900. After reaching a high in 1920, farm values decreased during

the depression years of the 1930's. Since 1940, however, the total value of farm property in the county has nearly quadrupled, increasing from about \$30,000,000 to around \$120,000,000 in 1959. According to Census of Agriculture, the average value of land and buildings per farm increased from a low of \$21,201 in 1940 to \$122,360 in 1959. Value of farmland per acre during the same period rose from \$41.40 to \$157.41.

The rise in farm and land values has been caused by several factors. One has been the general increase of prices in real estate throughout the western United States. Another factor has been the large amount of labor and capital Walla Walla County farmers have invested in land and building improvements since 1920. A third factor has been the increase in population and the expansion of commercial farming which has increased demands for farm land.

Table 10. Value of Farm Property  
Walla Walla County, 1900-1959

Year	County Average Values	
	Per Farm	Per Acre
1900	\$ 13,586	\$ 21.50
1910	28,573	53.40
1920	38,931	83.15
1930	28,894	61.60
1940	21,201	41.40
1950	59,394	87.20
1954	87,012	131.13
1959	122,360	157.41

Source: U. S. Census of Agriculture.

### Farm Tenure

About one-half of the farmers in Walla Walla County owned the farm they operated in 1959. Full owners controlled 10.9 percent of the county's total farmland in that year. About 30 percent of the farms were operated by part owners—farmers who own part of their land and rent land from others. Unlike the full-

Table 11. Farm Tenancy, Number and Percent of Farms  
by Tenure of Operator, Walla Walla County, 1925-1959

Year	Number of Farms	Full Owners		Part Owners		Managers		Tenants	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
1925	1,415	787	55.6	228	16.1	22	1.5	378	26.7
1930	1,498	754	50.3	259	17.3	31	2.1	454	30.3
1935	1,607	789	49.1	223	13.9	38	2.4	557	34.7
1940	1,420	694	48.9	262	18.4	26	1.8	439	30.8
1945	1,294	762	58.9	238	18.4	20	1.5	274	21.2
1950	1,225	688	56.2	310	25.3	15	1.2	215	17.5
1954	1,101	610	55.6	290	26.5	9	.8	192	17.4
1959	981	499	50.9	298	30.4	7	.7	177	18.0

Source: U. S. Census of Agriculture.

owner farms which have steadily decreased in number since 1935, part-owner operations in the county have continued to increase, numbering around 300 units in recent years. About 66 percent of Walla Walla County's farmland in 1959 was under the part-owner type of operation. This type of operation is common in wheat farming where machinery makes large units practical and more economical to run. Many elderly and retired people arrange to have parts of their farms operated by neighboring ranchers.

Tenancy--the renting and leasing of land--is not uncommon in Walla Walla County. Although the number has continued to decrease since the 1930's, tenant farms numbered 177 in 1959 or about 18 percent of the total number of farms in the county. Tenant farmers, however, operated only 1.6 percent of the county's farmland during 1959. Manager-operated farms have also decreased in numbers since the 1930's, numbering only 7 in 1959. Managers--individuals who manage land for others and who receive a wage or salary for services--operated over a fifth of the county's farmland acreage in 1959. Manager farms tend to be large-scale operations with large acreages.

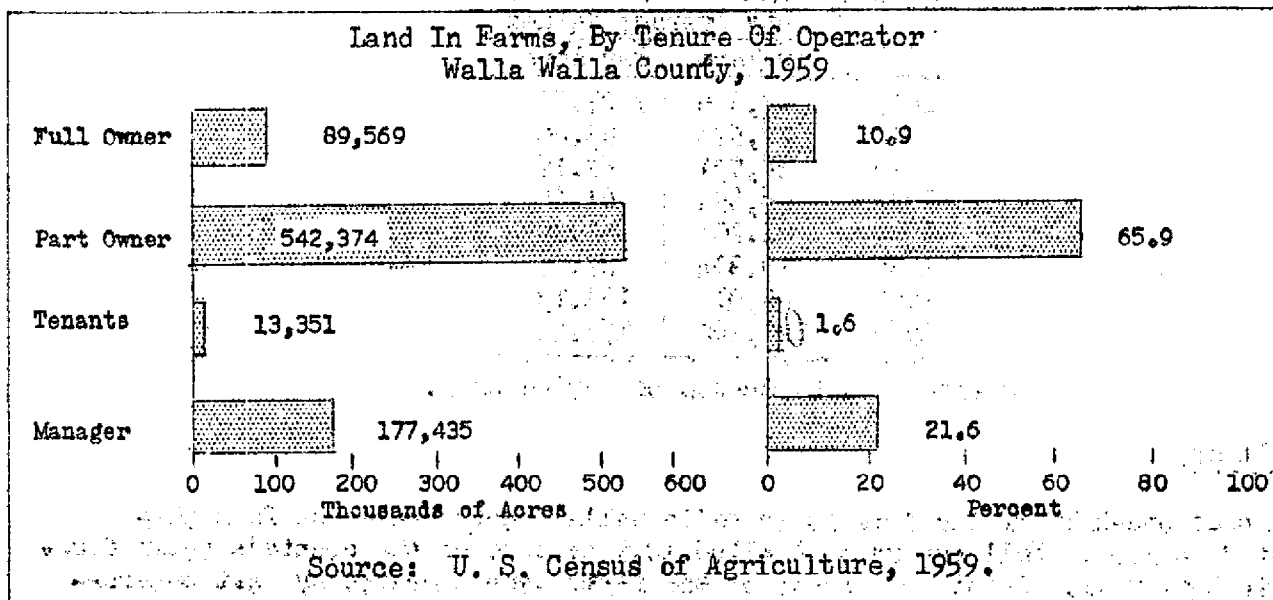


Figure 10. Land in Farms, By Tenure of Operator, Walla Walla County, 1959.

### Irrigation

The amount of irrigated cropland and pasture in Walla Walla County has been increasing steadily. In 1959, 37,296 acres were under irrigation compared with 32,942 acres in 1954 and 24,323 acres in 1950. Walla Walla ranked eighth in amount of land irrigated among the 39 Washington counties in 1959. Over 60 percent of the county farms were irrigated in that year. Also, land irrigated represented 4.5 percent of the county land in farms in 1959.

In 1959, approximately three-quarters of Walla Walla County's irrigated acreage was in crops. Most of the remaining land irrigated was pasture. In terms of acreage, alfalfa was the leading irrigated crop in 1959. Other important crops grown under irrigation included sugar beets, vegetables, wheat and barley.

Table 12. Irrigated Farms: Number and Acreage  
Walla Walla County, 1950, 1954 and 1959.

Item	1959	1954	1950
Number of irrigated farms	605	650	645
Land irrigated (acres)	37,296	32,942	24,323
Irrigated land in farms according to use:			
Farms irrigating crops .....	463	499	538
Acres of crops irrigated .....	27,833	24,387	16,553
Acres of other land irrigated .....	9,463	8,555	7,770

Source: U. S. Census of Agriculture.

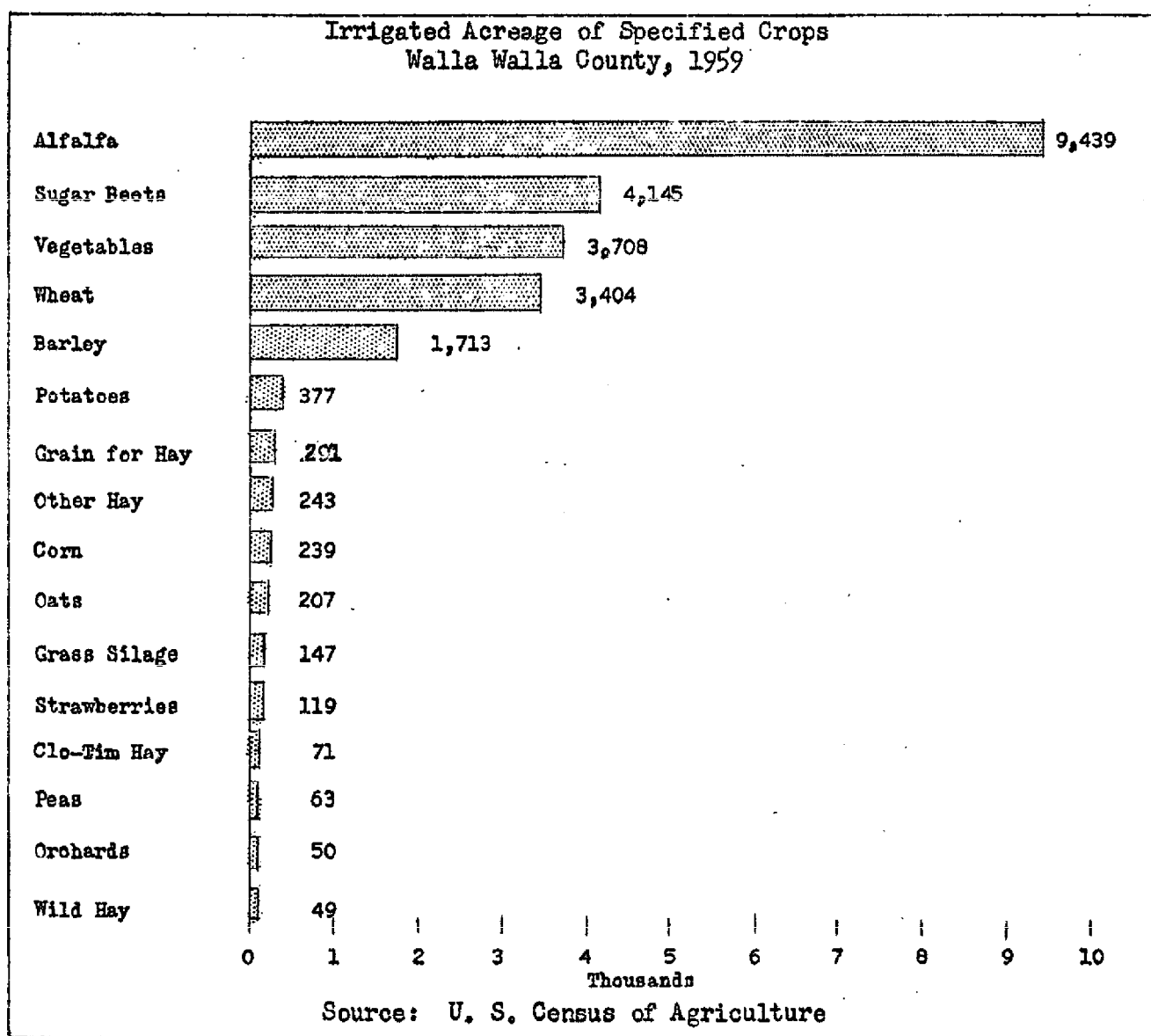


Figure 11. Irrigated Acreage of Specified Crops, Walla Walla County, 1959.

Irrigation systems in Walla Walla County have been developed by the Bureau of Reclamation and by cooperatives as well as by private individuals. About 62.2 percent of the irrigated land in the county was watered by sprinklers in 1959. Both wells and rivers are used as sources of irrigation water. Major areas of irrigation include the Walla Walla River Valley, the Touchet River Valley, the Dry Creek Valley and the Burbank district in the western part of the county.

### Farm Facilities

The capacity of a farmer to produce is significantly related to farm equipment and facilities at his disposal. Walla Walla County farms are relatively well-equipped with modern farm machinery and home conveniences such as telephones and home freezers. Tractors, motor trucks and automobiles are found on majority of Walla Walla County farms to provide most of the power and transportation. In 1959, over 86 percent of the farms reported 1,946 tractors of which 667 were of the crawler type. The number of farms with automobiles was 931, which represented nearly 95 percent of the Walla Walla County farms. Over 88 percent of the farms also had motor trucks in 1959.

The importance of wheat and barley in the county is indicated by the relatively high frequency of grain combines noted by the Census in 1959. There was also a high percentage of farms with power operated elevators, conveyors and blowers.

Table 13. Specified Facilities and Equipment on Farms  
Walla Walla County, 1959

Facility or Equipment Item	Number of Farms Using	Percent of All Farms in County Equipped
Telephone .....	926	94.4
Home freezer .....	692	70.5
Milking machine .....	116	11.8
Electric milk cooler ...	63	6.4
Crop drier (for grain, forage or other crops)	2	.8
Power operated elevator, conveyor or blower ...	208	21.2
Grain combines .....	373	38.0
Corn pickers .....	6	.6
Pick-up baler .....	145	14.8
Field forage harvester .	37	3.8
Motortrucks .....	866	88.3
Tractors .....	847	86.2
Crawler tractors .....	353	36.0
Automobiles .....	931	94.9

Source: U. S. Census of Agriculture, 1959.



### Farm Roads

In recent years much progress has been made in providing all-weather roads for farm families. A large majority of the farms are located within easy access of the main highways in Walla Walla County. In 1959, nearly 65 percent of the farms were located on hard-surfaced roads. Only 10 percent of the farmsteads required travel on dirt roads while the remaining 25 percent of the farms were on improved roads of gravel, shell or shale.

Table 14. Number of Farms, Land in Farms and Value of Livestock and Crops Sold Off Farms, Washington Counties - 1959

County	Number of Farms	All Land in Farms (acres)	Value of all Crops Sold Off Farms (dollars)	Value of all Livestock and their Products Sold Off Farms (dollars)
Adams	786	1,076,960	21,055,532	3,547,300
Asotin	325	364,405	2,589,582	1,179,464
Benton	1,281	562,809	12,912,165	3,958,996
Chelan	1,636	215,646	16,877,563	660,083
Clallam	724	68,739	706,055	2,858,512
Clark	2,778	188,479	3,020,725	8,222,499
Columbia	333	359,134	9,778,027	1,148,786
Cowlitz	1,014	80,176	1,022,291	2,808,884
Douglas	935	1,012,561	12,985,276	1,067,743
Ferry	283	298,247	396,384	931,057
Franklin	742	590,027	10,305,160	3,596,711
Garfield	274	344,094	6,871,789	898,109
Grant	1,497	1,075,642	26,083,038	12,555,694
Grays Harbor	896	99,529	924,067	2,639,777
Island	493	38,702	515,863	1,909,572
Jefferson	266	35,123	212,568	758,107
King	2,952	114,719	6,240,212	14,298,190
Kitsap	906	29,776	437,819	1,374,547
Kittitas	905	580,035	2,961,833	10,945,370
Klickitat	741	960,614	3,859,102	3,083,797
Lewis	2,230	255,012	1,893,636	7,935,581
Lincoln	959	1,422,981	21,035,259	3,253,383
Mason	328	35,518	202,594	728,250
Okanogan	1,762	2,048,406	10,681,584	5,723,537
Pacific	499	53,348	819,224	1,086,617
Pend Oreille	366	124,239	265,001	1,222,488
Pierce	2,535	153,363	4,928,685	10,850,000
San Juan	209	45,707	91,694	595,403
Skagit	1,740	141,770	6,722,958	9,167,984
Skamania	177	20,177	283,595	259,736
Snohomish	2,919	148,604	2,788,695	12,899,240
Spokane	2,990	822,008	15,091,158	8,403,816
Stevens	1,608	803,776	3,836,457	5,676,015
Thurston	1,220	142,170	1,952,408	5,836,930
Wahkiakum	302	26,299	174,415	1,052,642
<u>WALLA WALLA</u>	981	822,729	19,957,499	4,228,801
Whatcom	3,151	185,045	3,943,630	17,706,625
Whitman	1,824	1,485,709	43,632,434	7,398,484
Yakima	6,010	1,884,694	75,760,207	32,919,536
State Total	51,577	18,716,972	353,816,184	215,388,266

Source: U. S. Census of Agriculture, 1959.